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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, before the mountains were settled and the hills brought forth, Your power and majesty were known. Come to our lawmakers on Capitol Hill today. Come as light to enlighten their minds. Come as truth to teach them Your precepts. Come as Spirit to transform their hearts. Come as fire to purge from them the dross of transgression. Come as power to use them in Your service. May Your presence provide them with such patience, steadiness, and encouragement that they will be instruments for Your glory.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 18, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the appropriations bill led by Senator MIKULSKI.

We hope to begin the consideration of the bill today. We are now postcloture. We had to file cloture to get on the bill, as usual, and I think we have wasted the 30 hours. But that is where we are. So we hope to begin consideration of the bill today and work through the amendments. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled.

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Over the last several days the world has looked in horror as the terrorist organization ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, has swept across Iraq. As we speak they are sweeping even closer to Baghdad. They are murdering and they are pillaging. The group is now positioned outside Baghdad. It threatens to unleash its violent extremism on the capital of Iraq. ISIS poses a threat to Iraq and the surrounding region—and that is an understatement.

As President Obama and his advisors consider options to combat the threat, conservative Members of Congress—or I should say Republican Members of Congress and their pundit cheer-

leaders—are more interested in playing their favorite game—their favorite game: blame Obama. It doesn't matter what it is, it is his fault for putting people's lives in jeopardy—our military, special forces. The FBI captured someone who was the ringleader of the Libya Benghazi attack. They have criticized the President for bringing this man to justice.

Yesterday I listened with dismay when the Republican leader suggested and claimed that President Obama prematurely withdrew troops from Iraq. Think about that for a minute—5,500 dead Americans, tens of thousands wounded. Thousands and thousands have been wounded grievously.

I ask my friend and Republicans he leads, would they have preferred the United States stay in Iraq? Would they have preferred our soldiers have stayed in Iraq in harm's way? Is he—are they, the Republicans—willing to risk more American lives?

The Republican leader and other Republicans seem to have forgotten why President Obama initiated the troop drawdown in June of 2009. Why? The Iraqis wanted us out. The Iraqi government didn't want American forces to stay. Is the Republican leader and the Republicans he leads suggesting that American servicemembers should risk their lives even more, even as the Iraqi people were telling our military to leave?

What has been taking place in Iraq is a civil war. Do the Republicans and their leader believe that service men and women from Kentucky and the other 49 States across this great country should be inserted in the middle of their civil war? I don't think so. Fighting between factions in Iraq has cost thousands of Iraqi and American lives over the last decade, and it spawned a new breed of terrorism now. Yet the original architects of the war—of the invasion of Iraq—would have us believe that this is all President Obama's fault. Think about that.

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Is there anything further from the truth?

I don't think so. This is an Iraqi civil war, and it is time for the Iraqis to resolve it themselves. Those who attack President Obama for bringing our troops home from Iraq are wrong and out of step with the American people. After a decade of war the American people have had enough. American families have had enough. I do not support in any way putting our men and women in the midst of this civil war in Iraq. It is not in the national security interests of our country. It is not worth the blood of American soldiers. It is not worth the monetary cost to the American taxpayer.

Rather than spending hundreds of billions of dollars—the war in Iraq is at about \$1.5 trillion. Rather than spending more money doing that—fighting George W. Bush's war—how about we use that money to rebuild our Nation's infrastructure—roads, bridges, dams, water systems, sewer systems. We have a deficit in infrastructure of trillions of dollars.

How about doing a better job of educating our children? Maybe we could raise the minimum wage or give the long-term unemployed unemployment compensation or maybe we could help men and women draw the same amount of money for doing the same work or maybe we could fully fund the Veterans' Administration and ensure that our veterans—more than a million have come back from Iraq—are getting the care they need and deserve. Instead of addressing these issues at home, they are stuck in the same game. And it is not blame Obama; this is a new one—new yesterday or the day before. They are stuck listening to the very same neocons—obviously, that is where the Republicans are getting their information again—the same neocons who pushed us into the Iraq war in the first place, as they try to plunge our military in yet another foreign misadventure.

What is absurd is the fact that after all these years their suggestions haven't changed. They are in a time warp. Those who are the so-called experts are so eager to commit American soldiers to another war. Why is their advice so valuable?

Take President Bush's Paul Wolfowitz, who some say was the architect of the war. He has accused President Obama recently of not taking a strong position in Iraq. Wolfowitz took a strong position on Iraq's sectarian violence when he stated—listen to this bizarre statement—and this is a quote: "There's been none of the record in Iraq of ethnic militias fighting one another." No, only for centuries. Look at what he said: There is none of the record in Iraq of militias fighting each other. That is Wolfowitz.

How about Bill Kristol—not the comedian. He is a writer. Bill Kristol is another one of the architects of the Iraq war who infamously predicted that American soldiers would be wel-

comed as liberators in Iraq. He said the war would last 2 months. Well, he was only wrong by about 9 years and 10 months. Kristol also claimed there was no evidence of discord among Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq. No? Only centuries of discord—centuries. Yet even in light of this incorrect assertion about Iraq, Kristol went on to say that we need to have more fighting in Iraq, beating the drum alongside all the neoconservative friends.

This morning there was an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal. Who would write that? How about Dick Cheney? Just to remind everyone, he is the former Vice President of the United States, who clearly was the chief architect of the war. If there is one thing this country does not need, it is that we should be taking advice from Dick Cheney on wars. Being on the wrong side of Dick Cheney is being on the right side of history.

To the architects of the Iraq war, who are now so eager to offer their expert analysis, I say thanks but no thanks. Unfortunately, we already tried it your way, and it was the biggest foreign policy blunder in the history of the country. Now people come back and say they can give me some examples that have been worse, and I listen. But for me—I know a little bit about history—this was a foreign policy blunder that would be hard to take away from being the number one foreign policy blunder in the history of the country.

President Obama and his military advisors are considering their options to address ISIS, but putting combat troops back in Iraq isn't one of them. I have no doubt that President Obama and America will meet this threat head-on without the advice of Wolfowitz, Cheney, Kristol—the architects of the invasion of Iraq. President Obama will meet the threat with the same smart foreign policy which has been the hallmark of his administration. The President will continue to identify and protect what is truly in our national security interests, using our full array of national security tools and standing up to terrorism where it threatens our national stability.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. For 5½ years the Obama administration and its allies in Congress have sought cover for their disastrous economic agenda with routine broadsides against an endless procession of straw men. It is hard to recall a single speech from a Democratic leader in Washington that didn't involve some spirited defense of a principle nobody ever challenged or some attack on a villain that doesn't exist. Instead of working with us on ideas

that would actually do something to alleviate the concerns and anxieties of the middle class, these Democratic leaders have been blissfully content to play politics year after year after year.

Instead of delivering relief, they have delivered a steady diet of bad political theater day in and day out with the same ridiculous and predictable moral every single time: Democrats care. So vote for them and all will be well.

If you haven't noticed, all is not well for working families in this country. Four years after administration officials trumpeted "recovery summer" in June 2010, working men and women in this country are more anxious about work and family and the high cost of living—and that is to say nothing of the millions who can't find work at all.

The White House knows all of this, and that is why they are planning to hold a summit on the topic next week. They want everyone to think they are on the case, that they have a plan, but what they don't seem to realize is nobody believes them anymore and that folks have moved on.

The sad truth is most of the folks I have talked to are convinced government is working against them, not for them. I don't blame them. Whether it is frustration over an absurdly complicated Tax Code that drains people of their time and energy or just a general sense that government programs are rigged to help the well-off and well-connected, an increasing number of our constituents don't even think government is capable—let alone interested—in making their lives any easier these days. It is a shame because while the Obama administration has been playing politics, Republicans have been quietly assembling a lot of good ideas to help Americans deal with the stresses of a modern economy.

All of these ideas are consistent with our party's longstanding commitment to the principles of upward mobility, shared responsibility for the weak, and a strong but limited central government. Every single one of them deserves a vote.

For my part, I have pressed for legislation that addresses a variety of concerns of the people in my State. The Family Friendly and Workplace Flexibility Act, which I introduced with Senator AYOTTE, would enable working mothers to enter into a voluntary agreement with their employers whereby they could bank overtime compensation in the form of time off with their families. It would give families the choice, not just the employer.

Another bill I will introduce today will fix a flaw in the Tax Code so men or women who work at home are not prevented from claiming a deduction for a home office if that office includes a baby crib so they can take care of their child while working. The Working Parents Home Office Act would not only help parents save on childcare costs, it would help increase their earning potential by incentivizing them to create new income streams from home.